

THE DRAMA IN PARIS DURING THE SIEGE.

A correspondent of the London Athenaeum gives the following highly interesting description of the manner in which the besieged Parisians contrived to gratify their tastes for the drama.

The most striking indication of the superiority which the French actors possess over their British brethren is observable in their indifference to stage paraphernalia. No nation is so scrupulous in correctness of detail as our Gallic neighbors; and yet when circumstances arise which preclude a pursuit of realistic truth, there are really no actors but the Parisians who can take a stand on the excellence of their elocution, and charm the spectator to tears or laughter independent of the trammels of theatrical illusion.

After the disasters of Sedan the natural hilarity of the capital met with a sudden check; Paris sank into such a depth of despair as to forsake its theatres; Madlle Desclée smiled to empty benches, and the bewitching Pierson shrugged her fascinating shoulders in vain. Such a state of things was unprecedented in the history of the theatre.

Two theatres struggled on, endeavoring to cheer the widows in a general "apree," and had undertaken to combine a funeral with private theatricals. The incongruity was great for a few moments after the rising of the curtain; but a short space of time sufficed to cause the spectator to forget such details in admiration of the marvellous power of concentration which these artists possess.

Afternoon performances took place thenforth with tolerable regularity every Thursday and Sunday. Moliere and Marivaux prepared the way for Scribe—"Tartuffe" and the "Misanthrope" gave way to "Ladies' Battle"; but this was too much for the outraged feelings of the Brutes and "Andromache" was hastily substituted.

By degrees, even they became more tolerant, and allowed stage-dresses to be donned once more. The bombardment commenced in course of time—homes were shelled and children slaughtered in the streets; still the curtain rose to crowded houses, and people calmly read their papers during the entr'actes to the sullen booming of distant guns.

On the day of the final struggle of dying Paris, when her sons went out and fought for the first and only time—while mothers and wives and sisters were crowding anxiously about the gates, waiting with sickening heart and pallid lips for news of their dear ones who had gone out that morning never to return, the "Francis" played "Le Medicin malgre Lui." Got-outside himself; never was he more brilliant: the public was entranced, and recalled him again and again.

The dreary cannon roared far away—too far away to be exciting, and yet close by—but two miles off, under the walls of the great city: presently there was a stir and whispering—a commotion in the corridor, as a brandard was carried by bearing a shapless mass covered with a bloody cloak: it was all that remained of poor Stevens, a promising young actor attached to the theatre. He had played his part in a great tragedy, and had gone forth that day to offer himself up for his country's weal: the sacrifice had been accepted; he was carried into the Foyer des Artistes with a mortal wound, and disappeared in the shadow of Talma's statue, behind the towering marble of the great Rachel.

"Poor Stevens! so young—so full of promise! Ah, well, it's very sad!" and the buzzing ceased, and every man settled himself in his seat and rubbed his glasses with his handkerchief, as the prompter gave three raps and the curtain rose for the last act.

After a few trials the opera broke through the rule of "afternoons," boldly resumed the evening hours of representation, and these remained in force until the end. The house was lit entirely with candles, a soft and pleasant light enough, but one which helped but little to chase away the grayward chill of all those bitter cubic inches. Every instrument seemed to have a frozen echo, and a perfect cloud of steam issued from the mouths of the chorists as they rose and commenced to sing. I do not know when I ever saw so sad a spectacle as that vast house presented, packed to the roof with uniforms and sable dresses, the only bits of color in the mass being the galleons of the officers, their caps and facings; on the stage a crowd of ladies like a rustling band of crows; at either end a group of citizens "coupe-choux" on thigh, the ensigns of war upon their breasts.

The ice being thus fairly broken, the "Francis" took the lead by the horns, and opened its doors with a promise of a regular play. Beaumarchais' comedy of "Figaro's Marriage" was accordingly given, with Got the inimitable in his original character, supported by Mesdames Brohan, Ponsin, and Dubois. Fancy Cherubino, archest of pages, played by a demure young lady in a black silk gown—the trial scene of the third act with puzzled bigwigs and grand seigneurs all clad alike in the monotonous black and red of the National Guard uniform—the lively barber in white gloves with a blue great coat, ill-fitting black trousers, and military boots and spurs. It was as though the garb of a country town had joined the widows in a general "apree," and had undertaken to combine a funeral with private theatricals.

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PANEL PLANK, ALL THICKNESSES. COMMON PLANK, ALL THICKNESSES. 1 COMMON BOARDS. 1 RED SIDE FRUCE BOARDS. WHITE PINE FLOORING BOARDS. YELLOW AND SAP PINE FLOORINGS, 1 1/2 and 3/4 SPRUCE JOIST, ALL SIZES. HEMLOCK JOIST, ALL SIZES. PLASTERING LATH A SPECIALTY. Together with a general assortment of Building Lumber for sale low for cash. T. W. SMALES, 1130 1/2 No. 1715 HEDGE Avenue, north of Poplar St.